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# THE IRISH UNIVERSITY QUESTION.

BY

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## THE IRISH UNIVERSITY QUESTION.

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FOR many years I have taken a deep and active interest in the Irish University Question. Being thoroughly convinced that the Roman Catholics of Ireland have a real and substantial grievance to complain of, I have been very desirous that this grievance should be redressed. But feeling, as an Irishman and as a Protestant, a warm interest in the prosperity of Trinity College, I have been anxious that whatever measure might be adopted by Parliament to redress the Roman Catholic grievance, should not be such as would tend in any way to the injury of this institution, which is perhaps the only thoroughly successful institution of which Ireland can boast. Whilst desiring, in this and every other matter, to accord to the Roman Catholics of Ireland a full measure of justice, I have been equally desirous of preserving for the Protestants of Ireland every right and privilege to which they are justly entitled.

Whilst in Parliament, I freely expressed my opinions on this important subject on several occasions; but I am aware that they did not meet with much approval from Protestants generally; and there may have been some who believed that the views which I put forward were not sincere, but were taken up for the purpose of pleasing my Roman Catholic constituents. Now, however, as I am no longer a Member of Parliament, and as I have no intention of again offering myself as a candidate for the suffrages of any constituency, there can be no such reason for anyone to look on my declarations of opinion with suspicion.

I desire, therefore, once more, before the proposed secularization of Trinity College is carried into operation, to ask the

attention of the members of the University, and of the public, to a statement of my views, and the reasons on which they are founded; for I am convinced that the secularization of Trinity College, which evades instead of meeting the Roman Catholic grievance, will place the interests of the College, as a place of Education for the Protestants of Ireland, in great jeopardy, and may eventually prove fatal.

Hitherto the Protestants of both England and Ireland have held that the principle on which the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin were founded—viz., that religion and learning should go together—was sound; but when the Roman Catholics of Ireland asked to be placed upon an equality with the Protestants of Ireland, by a charter and an endowment being given to the Catholic University, the Protestants, in order to avoid having to grant to the Roman Catholics what they asked for, declared that they preferred that the equality should be arrived at by taking away from Trinity College its Protestant and Christian character.

The Government Bill of last year proposed to settle the difficulty by affiliating Trinity College as a Protestant institution, on the one hand, and the Stephen's Green College, as a Roman Catholic institution, on the other hand, to a new mixed University. The Roman Catholics rejected the offer, as being insufficient; and the Protestants of Ireland, and the Conservative party, took advantage of the circumstance to throw out the Bill. I am not now going to defend the Bill, many of the provisions of which I publicly condemned last year; but I regretted then, and still regret, not that the Bill was lost, but that it was not allowed to pass into committee, in order that, by the thorough discussion of its details, the possibility or impossibility of working out the principle on which it was founded might have been conclusively shown.

The Bill having thus been thrown out, the Government agreed to accept that part of Mr. Fawcett's Bill which abolished tests, rejecting the clauses which altered the constitution of the governing body of the University; and it is to the consequences which are likely to result, if this should lead to the complete secularization of Trinity College, that I desire to ask the consideration of my readers.

The College authorities are now seeking to give full effect to that Abolition of Tests Act, by means of a Queen's letter altering the statutes of the College; and for this purpose they are eliminating the word "religion" wherever it occurs in the statutes; thus, so far as the influence of the statutes extends, rendering the College a purely secular institution, in which men of any religion, or of no religion at all, may hold the highest places, and direct and give the tone to the education of the University students of Ireland.

It is generally supposed that this will be a complete settlement of the University question. It is therefore well to consider what will be its probable results. The authorities of the Roman Catholic Church have, as is well known, refused to accept it; yet individual Roman Catholics will, no doubt, avail themselves of it, and will contend for fellowships and become candidates for professorships and other such offices. But how will it be looked on by the Protestants? Are the Protestants of Ireland really as much enamoured of united education as the authorities of the College appear to suppose? Will the increased number of Roman Catholic students, and the presence of Roman Catholics as professors and as members of the Academic Council, be an inducement to them to send their sons to Trinity College as resident students? It may be considered by some as an unworthy prejudice; but I fear there are very many Protestants who will consider the increased number of Roman Catholic students to be no recommendation for Trinity College, when compared with the English Universities, and who will look with much suspicion at the presence of Roman Catholics on the Academic Council. If there be any foundation for this idea, and there certainly is some foundation for it, the effects of this prejudice on the part of Protestants must increase according to the increase in the number of Roman Catholic students, and of Roman Catholics holding professorships or any other offices in the College or University.

Again, the natural outcome of the new system is the expulsion of the Faculty of Theology; for how is a Protestant Theological Faculty to be kept up under a mixed council, of which those who hold the doctrines of the Irish Protestant Episcopal Church

may perhaps be only a minority ? The loss of the Divinity School will, no doubt, deprive the College of a large number of those students who are preparing for orders in the Church, thus still further diminishing the proportion of Protestant students, and increasing the unwillingness of Protestant parents to send their sons to be educated in the College.

But the cessation of Divine worship in the College Chapel must almost necessarily follow the giving up of the School of Divinity, thus completing the secularization of the College. Can it be supposed by any one that this will be satisfactory to the Protestants of Ireland ? Have they not even a prejudice, if you will not call it a principle, in favour of the recognition of Christianity in connexion with education ? Do they not wish to have their children educated religiously as Protestants ? How, then, can it be expected that a College deprived of all recognition of Christianity will compete on equal terms with other Colleges, for the support of those Protestants who are sincerely attached to the faith which they profess ? I cannot believe that it will ; but rather anticipate that the Protestant gentry of Ireland will, for the most part, send their sons to Oxford and Cambridge for their education, while the less wealthy classes will probably prefer to enter theirs as non-resident students.

The preamble of the Act passed last year for the abolition of tests, recognizes "the schools of the University as places of "religion and learning;" and the Act specially excepts from its operation "the professors of and lecturers in Divinity, so long "as the University of Dublin shall continue to teach, and to "grant degrees in the Faculty of Theology." There is no reference in the Act to the College Chapel, but Divine worship is still continued in it, and I believe there is no present intention of discontinuing it. How the schools of the University are to be maintained as "places of religion" under a mixed Board, composed of Protestants and Roman Catholics, and men of no particular belief, is a difficulty which I cannot pretend to solve; but the Provost looks forward to "an "arrangement being made for the religious worship and reli- "gious teaching of Roman Catholics and Presbyterians" within

the walls of the College, and no doubt he hopes that such an arrangement will preserve the College from the pure secularism which now threatens it. I think those who have watched the progress of events in Ireland will see little reason to expect that the Roman Catholic Prelates will accede to this proposal, after having refused to avail themselves of the provision for Deans of Residences in the Queen's Colleges.

I have been informed that the number of Roman Catholic students entering Trinity College has increased since the passing of the Act of last year. This is what might naturally have been expected. The Roman Catholics have, I suppose, given up the hope of any immediate settlement of this question, which would place their own College in the position to which it is entitled, and which they had hoped for, and therefore they naturally try to do the best they can for themselves under existing circumstances. Their numbers will probably increase still more, and the number of Protestants, or at least of Episcopalian Protestants, will probably decrease. The Roman Catholic students may, before many years, become a majority, in which case they will soon obtain a majority in the Senate. They will, I have no doubt, prove their ability and industry by the acquisition of fellowships, and the Academic Council will be called upon to appoint a fair proportion of Roman Catholics as Professors ; and this they will do, if only to prove their liberality and freedom from prejudice.

In fact, it will become necessary in every appointment, from the College porters upwards, to consider the religious profession of the candidates, so as to hold the balance evenly. The Government will certainly be pressed to appoint a Roman Catholic as Provost when a vacancy occurs ; and if the College is to be the National Institution for Ireland, it is only fair that its Provost should, at least occasionally, be a Roman Catholic. We may therefore reasonably anticipate that such an appointment will be made. But the presence of a Roman Catholic Provost, no matter how profound his learning, how pure his life and morals, and how wise and just his administration, will scare from the College a large number of Protestant

students. What must we expect to be the future course of events? It has been said that there is nothing certain but the unforeseen. I do not pretend to be a prophet; but I cannot help believing that, if the School of Divinity be given up, the College Chapel closed, and a Roman Catholic appointed to be Provost, the Roman Catholics will, before many years shall have passed away, have obtained the majority in the Academic Council as well as in the Senate, and the Establishment of Elizabeth will, notwithstanding Mr. Fawcett's Act, have become Roman Catholic in every respect—the Protestant University of Ireland will have ceased to exist.

If Trinity College should come thus under the control of Roman Catholics, they will find no difficulty in re-establishing religious teaching and religious worship within its walls ; and it is much better that they should do so, than that it should remain as a secular establishment wholly unconnected with Christianity in any form. But the loss to the Protestants of Ireland will be great ; and it is a loss which even now might, I think, be avoided, if the claims of justice, or even the promptings of self-interest, could so far overcome sectarian jealousy, and the *odium theologicum*, as to induce the Protestants of Ireland to second the Roman Catholics in pressing on the Government, whether Liberal or Conservative, the establishment of a Roman Catholic University suitably endowed.

When Mr. Fawcett first brought forward his plan for opening Trinity College, the College authorities opposed him strenuously. Afterwards they turned right round and supported him, alleging that the disestablishment of the Church had altered their position. But was it not the disendowment rather than the disestablishment which induced them to change sides? Was it not the fear that some of its property might be taken from the Protestant College, which induced them to turn round and support a principle which they had previously denounced? Were their opinions really changed, so that they considered the secularization of the College to be in itself a good thing, and likely to promote the interests of religion and learning in Ireland? or did they support the plan of secularization in order to defeat the claims of the Roman Catholics

for a University of their own ? I am far from attributing any motive of private interest to the Board or to any of the other members of the College. Their own life-interests were safe under any circumstances. Their fears were not for themselves personally, but on account of the noble institution which was under their care, and for which they felt a strong personal interest. But in my opinion they have sacrificed principle to expediency, and have sold the Protestant birth-right of Trinity College for a mess of pottage.

One thing is evident. They knew the change would not have any immediate effect. It was a change of principle of the most important character, which must produce the most important results hereafter, but which would work gradually, and perhaps be scarcely felt by the present generation. There is a record left us in the history of the kingdom of Judah, of a king who, when told by a prophet that the time should come when the enemies of his country would carry away his children as captives, and take all that was in his house as their spoil, consoled himself with the reflection that these evils were not to take place during his lifetime ; " for," said he, " there shall be peace and truth in my days."

The change will be the gradual work of years. Some one or two persons who have hitherto been excluded, may, perhaps, be now chosen as members of the Academic Council. Those who hereafter attain to that position will have grown up from their youth under the influences of College associations. They will have lived in constant intercourse and free interchange of thought with men of various creeds and various opinions on every subject, whose work and occupation will have been the acquisition of knowledge and the investigation of truth. It seems to be expected that this intercourse and these intimacies will so far influence the minds of Roman Catholic students that old jealousies and political and religious differences will be forgotten, and all will work together harmoniously for the good of the University. It is a pleasing picture. But put this idea in other words. Does it not really imply the expectation that Roman Catholics, educated in Trinity College, and in close intimacy with Protestants, will cease to be Roman

Catholics?—will cease, at all events, to care for their Church, whether they openly renounce her communion or not? Is there in the events of the past any foundation for such an expectation? And if no foundation in the past, what reason is there to expect it in the future?

Some Protestants think that a change is taking place among the members of the Roman Catholic Church everywhere, and they expect the results of this change to show themselves in Ireland, in a much greater freedom on the part of the laity from the influence of, and dependence on the clergy. Such men speak of Roman Catholics as under a bondage from which they are striving to be freed, and they think that the opening of Trinity College as a secular institution will assist these strivings for independence. In my opinion the relation between the clergy and laity is an affair for the Roman Catholics themselves, with which Protestants have nothing to do, and in which their interference can do no good; and I look upon it as most insulting to Roman Catholics to speak of them in this way. They have the remedy in their own hands, if they feel themselves in a state of bondage; and Protestants would do as well not to proffer their assistance until they are asked for it. If the safety of the University, under a mixed governing board, is to depend upon any such supposed change, by which Roman Catholics will cease to consider the interests of their Church as more important than those of any human institution, I cannot look upon the position as very secure.

But there are those who go much further, and who expect that, before many years have passed away, the spirit of free thought will have made such progress, that educated men—such as they hope will be found in the Universities of England and Ireland—will regard with equal indifference the doctrines of all Christian Churches. Whether these views have influenced any of those members of the University who have assisted in the recent changes I know not; but it must be evident to everyone who sees what is passing in the world around him, that such views have a powerful influence in the present agitation for the separation of secular learning from religious culture, and in the assertion that morality may and ought to be

inculcated without any reference to religion or to the Bible.

The men who hold these opinions look upon the secularization of Trinity College as only one step in the change which is in progress; and they expect it to be followed soon by the prohibition of the Bible in English Primary Schools, and by further changes of a similar character in the Public Schools and Colleges of England and Scotland.

Such persons regard the elimination of religion from the College Statutes, the expulsion of the School of Divinity, the shutting up of the College Chapel, and the complete secularization of the College, as things to be expected in the ordinary course of events, which will all tend to the progress of civilization and the advancement of the human race. It is natural that they should try to forward changes which they believe will work usefully. But why are truly religious Christian men to be found in the same ranks, allied with those whose ultimate object so widely differs from theirs? The answer is, I believe, to be found in that theological hatred which in England impels the Nonconformists to combine with the secularists in attacking the Church, and which in Ireland induces the Protestants to give up religious culture and teaching in their own schools and colleges, rather than consent to the State giving any countenance or support to schools or colleges in which Roman Catholic doctrines are inculcated. Such self-denial is certainly a strong protest against Rome; but it is not, I think, the true Christian protest: it is a protest of mere negation: it is a protest which the sceptic or the Deist can make as well as the Christian: it is the protest which says, "You are wrong;" but it does not add, as St. Paul would certainly have done, "Come and we will show you the better way."

There is no such thing as neutrality in religion. A college in which Christianity is recognized and honoured is a Christian college. A college from which Christianity is eliminated is a non-Christian college. Can anyone believe that in this country, where three-fourths of the people are Roman Catholics, this non-Christian college will be allowed permanently to retain its endowments, if there be no recognition of, and no endowment for, a Roman Catholic Univer-

sity? If equality is to be produced by levelling down, after the precedent set by the Church Act, it must be complete: the revenues of Trinity College must be confiscated, and applied to other purposes—the present life-interests being, of course, respected. If equality is to be produced by levelling down, the maintenance of education, like that of religious worship, must be voluntary, without any endowment on the part of the State, of either Protestant or Roman Catholic colleges; or even of a secular non-Christian college.

In the disestablishment of the Church, the State has declared that it will not, for the future, make itself in any way responsible for the celebration of religious worship in Ireland. But its policy as respects education has been directly the reverse: both in England and Ireland, it has, year after year, taken increased interest in educational matters; and it has fully adopted the principle, that it is the duty of the State to provide the means of education for every individual. The only consideration is, how it can best carry out its educational system, so as to secure the object in view—namely, that of making all the individuals in the State better citizens.

The principle of the Church Act, therefore, is wholly different from that of the recent University legislation. By the Church Act the Irish Church was disestablished and disendowed, and all the Religious Bodies in Ireland were placed on the same level, being left to the voluntary support of their own members. The University has neither been disestablished nor disendowed, nor will all sects or all persons be placed on the same level by the course which is now apparently about to be pursued; for, if the College be secularized and religion excluded from it, so far as Acts of Parliament and the College Statutes can do it, a decided advantage will be given to those who care only for secular learning, over those persons, whether Protestants or Roman Catholics, who believe that all education ought to be openly connected with, and influenced by, Christianity.

To show the absurdity of looking upon the recent university legislation as dependent upon the Church Act, let us suppose, for a moment, that the University Act had been passed

first, and that the Church Act had afterwards been framed on the principle which had previously dictated the University Act. It would not, in such case, have disestablished or disendowed the Church ; but it would have abolished all tests, and enacted that “from and after the passing of this Act, no person shall be required, in order to enable him to take or hold any benefice or any office in the Church of Ireland, to subscribe to any article or formulary of faith, or to make any declaration respecting his religious belief or profession, or to conform to any form of public worship, or to belong to any specified church, sect, or denomination.”

This would have been opening the Church to all persons, without any distinction on account of religious belief, on the plan adopted in the University Act—a plan which, whether good or bad, has no connexion with that actually adopted in the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church.

It may be alleged with much more appearance of justice, that the abolition of tests in the English Universities necessarily drew after it the abolition of tests in Ireland. But the English precedent was not really followed in the Act passed last year for the University of Dublin. The preamble of the English Act states that “it is expedient that restrictions, tests, and disabilities should be removed ;” but it adds the qualification : “under proper safeguards for the maintenance of religious instruction and worship in the said Universities, and the Colleges and Halls subsisting within the same.” The first part of this is repeated in the Irish Act, but the qualification is wholly omitted—there is no reference to “safeguards for the maintenance of religious instruction and worship.”

The enacting parts of the two Acts of Parliament faithfully carry out the provisions of their respective preambles. The English Act expressly excepts from its operation all those offices which, “under the authority of any Act of Parliament, or any Statute of the University or College in force at the time of the passing of the Act, were restricted to persons in Holy Orders.” And it also provides that no office, except those specially mentioned, shall be opened “to any person

"who is not a member of the Church of England, when such office was, at the passing of this Act, confined to members of the said Church, by reason of any such degree as aforesaid [Holy Orders] being a qualification for such office." The English Act further provides that there shall be "no interference with the lawfully-established system of religious instruction, worship, and discipline," and that "Morning and Evening Prayer" shall be "used as heretofore." There are no such exceptions in the Irish Act, and no such safeguards for the maintenance of "religious instruction, worship, and discipline."

Thus, in the English Act, care is taken, so far as legislation can do it, for the preservation of the Colleges as places of religion as well as places of learning; and it may well be expected that these Colleges will remain as places of religious instruction for the students belonging to the Episcopal Church of England, so long as the majority of the students who resort to Oxford and Cambridge for their education shall belong to that Church. In Ireland all this is reversed. No care is taken to preserve the College as "a place of religion." On the contrary, religion is expelled so far as words can do it; and if the intention and expectations of the promoters of the Act be realized by Trinity College becoming the National College for the whole people of Ireland, the proportion of Roman Catholic students must gradually increase, until ultimately they become the majority, and the government of the College and University must then pass from Protestant into Roman Catholic hands.

The great majority of the students at Oxford and Cambridge are and will be members of the Church of England, whether Established or Disestablished; there will probably be a considerable number of Protestant Dissenters, but the Roman Catholics will be comparatively few. Under these circumstances, the Roman Catholics must submit to the regulations which are suited to the Protestant majority. But in Ireland the case is wholly different; and the Roman Catholics cannot be expected to submit permanently to Protestant or to secular regulations. They will naturally require

to have the arrangements suited to themselves as the majority, just as the arrangements in England are suited to the Protestant majority, and everyone who looks a few years ahead must see that, in some way or other, their object will certainly be attained.

I can understand Protestants who believe Protestantism to be truth and Roman Catholicism to be error, thinking that it would be a great benefit to Roman Catholics to be educated along with Protestants, and under Protestant influence; but I can scarcely believe that they think it would be a corresponding benefit to Protestants to be educated along with Roman Catholics, and under Roman Catholic influence. If they really do wish for united education, is it that they are so unselfish as to be willing to subject their own children to the risk of injury from an influence which they consider to be dangerous, for the sake of the benefit which they expect to confer upon the children of others; or is it that they expect to be able always to keep the upper hand, and to retain the University really Protestant though nominally unsectarian? If the latter, are they giving the fair play to the Roman Catholics which they profess to be giving, and creating a National University which shall place all upon equal terms?

To force people to come together is not the way to produce good feeling and harmony. It is better in education, as in all other matters, to leave men to choose for themselves whether they will work separately or in union with others. I have so much faith and confidence in Protestantism, that I am quite willing to place Roman Catholicism in a position of perfect equality; but I am not willing to silence Protestant teaching in order to justify the refusal to recognize the right of Roman Catholics to Roman Catholic teaching.

If any Protestants cherish the idea of being able always to keep the upper hand in the governing body of the University, they must be as singularly unobservant of the events which are passing around them as those are who indulge the pleasing hope that all sectarian differences will be forgotten in the serene atmosphere of the University. Do they not know that, with a few special exceptions, the question of religion perpe-

tually crops up at every mixed board in Ireland?—that it enters into the consideration of every appointment, so that the religious profession of even a dispensary doctor has really more influence on his election than his professional skill? Are they unaware of the great advance in wealth and in social position which has been made by the Roman Catholics of Ireland during the last half century? Do they not see that, except in Ulster, they have obtained the control of almost all the Town Councils and other elective boards? And with facts such as these patent before them, how do they expect to be able, for any long period of time, to keep the upper hand in the Academic Council of the University?

In self-governing institutions the majority must bear sway. The Queen's Colleges are not self-governing—all the professors and officers being nominated by the Crown. But Trinity College and the University of Dublin govern themselves; and, with the single exception of the Provost, all their offices are or will be either elective or obtained by competitive examination. The whole control, therefore, depends upon the graduates; and the party to which the majority of graduates belong, will in the end control the College and University.

The great objection which was made to the Government Bill of last year was, that the mixed University Board would never work harmoniously. The present scheme proposes a mixed governing body for both the University and the College. It is, I believe, impossible for Roman Catholics and Protestants to work together satisfactorily in the management of a College. Their views differ too widely in many points. Whether the question could, at any time, have been settled by the affiliation of separate denominational colleges to a mixed National University is doubtful. I thought that the attempt was, at all events, worthy of a trial. It is now, however, too late: the only solution that is now possible is the establishment of two separate Universities. The opening of Trinity College without any safeguards, may eventually lead to its becoming a Roman Catholic College; but it must be after a contest, in which there is much reason to fear that the College itself will be ruined—the interests of education being forgotten in the strivings for the control over it.

The Bill of last year provided no endowment for the Roman Catholic College; and in not providing an endowment it failed, in my opinion, to satisfy the requirements of justice and equity. It would, however, have redressed one part of the Roman Catholic grievance, for it would have given to the Roman Catholic College a status equal to that enjoyed by Trinity and the Queen's Colleges, as members of the same University, and would therefore have placed the higher education of the Roman Catholics of Ireland on a level with that of the Protestants. Such equality is no more than justice requires. It must form the basis of any equitable settlement of this question ; and a settlement on such terms as shall allow each party to work out its own educational ideas separately, is, I am convinced, the mode of settlement which would tend most to the promotion of religion and learning in Ireland. The claim of the Roman Catholics is for a university in which learning shall be united with religion, and such a university must for them be denominational. Their claim is just ; and a university which is open to all, but from which religion is excluded, utterly fails in satisfying it. The agitation for the redress of this grievance will certainly continue, and I have no doubt it will eventually be successful. But until the question has been settled, the position of Trinity College and the University of Dublin will be insecure. Their safety lies in the Catholic University obtaining a charter and a fair endowment.

It may appear to many that the die has been cast, and that there is now no hope of success in trying to stem the current. But I cannot thus give up hope. The pernicious principle of separating learning from religion has certainly been acknowledged; but it has not yet been carried into effect. The Abolition of Tests Act has been passed, but Trinity College is still practically a Christian establishment, and its government is still in the hands of Protestants ; and it may still be preserved as a Christian, and practically a Protestant institution, if a charter and endowment be conferred upon the Catholic University. Earnestly appealing, therefore, to those with whom the power may rest, I would say : Do not forget your responsibility to the Protestants of Ireland, for whose benefit the

institution under your care was founded : do not part with what remains of the religious character which properly attaches to the University of Dublin : preserve the Theological Faculty, and the School of Divinity for the Protestant Episcopal Church ; and keep up the service in the College Chapel. If with this you assist the efforts of the Roman Catholics to obtain the recognition and support of the State for the Catholic University, then Trinity College and the University of Dublin, notwithstanding their being opened to persons of all creeds, may still be preserved as Protestant institutions, for the promotion of religion and learning under Protestant guidance and control.



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